

**To: Mayor Mark Kruzan
Common Council of the City of Bloomington**

**From: David Hummons, Chair
Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males**

**Re: Annual Report from the City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of
Black Males**

Date: May 11, 2009

The City of Bloomington's Commission on the Status of Black Males was created to address the problems faced by African-American males in the areas of health, employment, criminal justice, and education. The purposes and duties of the group include, in part, to serve as a catalyst to promote positive public and private remedies to address the multi-faceted problems confronting Black males in the community, to organize and convene community meetings to discuss the status of Black males, and to network with other groups in the community and the state. The members of the Commission during 2008 included Commission Chair David Hummons (appointed by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission), Larry Brown (Human Rights Commission), Cedric Harris (Mayor), Oluwatope Fashola (Mayor), Bev Smith (Common Council), and George W. Tardy, Jr. (Mayor). Chuck Wilson (Mayor) replaced Oluwatope Fashola when she moved out of state in May. Greg Tourner (Common Council) was appointed in November. Staff support is provided by the City's Liaison, Special Projects Coordinator Craig Brenner.

The Commission began 2008 by calling for nominations for the third annual award to recognize local contributions by young African American men and to encourage the development of future leaders. The Commission selected Gerald Lee Mitchell, Jr. as the recipient of the award, which was presented by Commission Chair David Hummons at the City of Bloomington Black History Month Gala on February 23, 2008 at the Bloomington Convention Center.

In February, in response to a request from a Bloomington Police Department officer, the Commission began discussing the possibility of helping create a Citizens' Police Academy for youth. The Commission hopes to enter into additional discussions with representatives from the Bloomington Police Department toward this end.

During the summer, the Commission again participated in the Juneteenth Celebration in Bryan Park by staffing a booth.

In August, Bloomington Common Council member Mike Satterfield attended the Commission's monthly meeting, during which the Commission addressed several issues in the area of criminal justice. First, a guest presented information regarding the relatively large percentage of Black

males who are incarcerated both locally and statewide. Second, the Commission unanimously approved a request from Monroe County Prosecutor Chris Gaal that the Commission co-sponsor an initiative in support of a local Truancy Court.

During September, the Commission worked with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission and Bloomington Black Business and Professional Association to organize and provide free health screenings and information at the Soul Food Festival in September.

October of 2008 began with a Commission planning retreat on October 1, during which guests from the community made presentations on the areas of health, criminal justice and education. Commissioners then discussed on-going ways to address these areas of concern and began developing a strategic plan and accompanying time-line. Three members of the commission and City of Bloomington Liaison Craig Brenner attended the 14th annual Black Male State Conference in Indianapolis in mid-October and participated in workshops addressing education and health concerns. Commission Chair David Hummons and City Liaison Craig Brenner also participated as invited attendees in the Community Diversity Roundtable at City Hall on October 14.

Throughout 2008, the Commission continued to discuss initiatives in the area of education. However, action was stymied somewhat by the fact that the position of Superintendent of Schools for the Monroe County Community School Corporation was occupied by an interim appointee who announced his intention to resign during the school year, and he was succeeded by another interim appointee. As a result, concrete action on issues brought to light at the 2004 Town Hall Meeting on “Race, School Discipline, and Criminal Justice” has had to wait until a permanent Superintendent begins in 2009. However, a representative from the new charter school called the Project School attended several meetings of the Commission to update the members on this educational initiative.

There are currently two Mayoral vacancies on the Commission, and the members hope for a speedy appointment.

For detailed information on the activities of the Commission, please refer to the City’s Web site at www.bloomington.in.gov/cfrd.